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AN EXPOSURE OF THE ERRORS AND EVILS OF THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT OF SOCIETY; WITH A PARTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW ARRANGEMENT.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire."—Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

In proportion as a nation advances in knowledge, in the same proportion it ought to advance in happiness. Knowledge is only useful so far as it tends to this end; and that knowledge which has not this tendency, is no knowledge at all, but mere trash and nonsense.

Man has been boasting for ages about his noble endowments, his vast intelligence, his wondrous inventions and discoveries, while all the time he has been sinking deeper and deeper in wretchedness and vice. What use are his noble endowments, if they tend not to increase his happiness? What use are his vast intelligence, and his wondrous inventions and discoveries, if they tend not to lessen the amount of his misery? With all his endowments he is the most wretched animal in existence. What other animal undergoes half the amount of suffering that he does? Toiling incessantly day after day, and year after year, and with all his toil can scarcely obtain the necessities of life. At other times, when denied the privilege of toiling, he wanders about the country in beggary and in want, enduring all the sufferings that hunger and utter destitution must occasion. And while this is the case, he talks and boasts of his wisdom and intelligence! Just as if beggary and starvation were an evidence of them. If wise and intelligent, why not happy? If superior to other animals, why endure more misery than other animals? If possessed of nobler endowments, why so vicious and wicked? But the real fact is, man has been in a sort of dream from the period of his existence up to the present time. He has been labouring under the grossest delusions. When a mere infant, or when about one remove from a state of monkeyism, he conceived certain notions, and these have guided him in all his crazy wanderings from that day to this. These notions were gross errors, as might be expected, and the consequence has been that the world now abounds with want and beggary, fraud and deception, robbery and murder, and every other species of crime and iniquity, that a perversion of human nature is capable of. How was man in those days to understand human nature? How was he to draw conclusions on matters of which he was as ignorant as any animal in creation? How was he to form arrangements of the best kind to promote our happiness? Yet his monkey notions have been handed down to us as genuine and infallible truths. His stupid arrangements have been maintained age after age, not because they promoted our happiness, but (wisdom like) because they were "ancient and venerable!" Look even at the House of Commons in the present day. There we see men, whose business it is to promote the happiness and welfare of the people, acting in a manner the most ignorant and irrational. When a measure is brought forward, their first consideration is, not how much happiness or misery it will pro-

duce, but how will it harmonize with existing arrangements? Will it interfere with any of our venerable institutions? Is it in accordance with the wisdom of our ancestors? Is there any precedent for it? And in this way they decide as to its adoption or rejection. Now can anything be more ridiculous? Can anything be more absurd and irrational? If the measure will promote our happiness, what do we care about existing arrangements? What *need* we care? If it will lessen the amount of vice, and crime, and misery amongst us, what do we care whether it interferes with "our venerable institutions" or not? Yet these men are called the "collective wisdom of the nation!" And I suppose this is a sample of it. Such wisdom may be worthy the parties who are blessed with it, but very different is the wisdom of rational beings. If we are to be guided and governed by the "wisdom" of our ancestors, why call us progressive beings? And if we are progressive beings, why fasten us down to their ignorant and irrational arrangements, and especially when we see such vice and misery springing out of them?

The only object of our existence is happiness, and if existing arrangements confer not happiness why then, put an end to them and make better arrangements. This is what reason and rationality would suggest. The more "venerable" (as they call it) any thing is, the more reason there is for its alteration. Man is progressive; he acquires fresh knowledge daily; and the arrangements made to day may be greatly improved tomorrow; and when this is the case, how ridiculous it is to hear men talking about maintaining our "venerable institutions;" "our glorious constitution in church and state;" and all such blurring nonsense; but what is most singular is, that the wisest men in the nation, or at any rate those who ought to be the wisest, are the very men who are continually using these ignorant expressions. All things ought to be estimated by the good or the evil they produce, and if we see an institution producing evil, reason and rationality would order its removal.

Paine says that "governments are for the accommodation of the living, and not the dead;" and so it is with all institutions and all arrangements whatever. The living alone are concerned and not the dead. What then have our ancestors to do with our wants and wishes? Why consult them as to what sort of institutions we shall have? Their institutions might suit themselves perhaps, but is that any reason why they ought to suit us?

Let us, then, rise from our slumbering delusions, and devote ourselves to the grand and only object of our existence; that of making ourselves happy. Let us discover the causes of human suffering and all human ills; let us trace them to their source, and whatever institutions may

occasion them, however "ancient and venerable," let us remove them in all possible haste, and supplant them with better. Let us value institutions, not by their age, but by the amount of good or evil they produce. If we find them producing good, let us support them; but if we find them producing evil, let us remove them. Let us do these things, and then will the human race show their intelligence and wisdom. Then will they remove themselves from a state of vice, poverty, and wretchedness, to a state of virtue and happiness. Then, indeed, we may boast of our intelligence and wisdom, our inventions and discoveries. Then we shall have something worthy of exultation. But to be boasting of these while thousands of people are starving,—while thousands are driven to theft, robbery, and murder, is a species of brutal insanity that man alone is capable of.

With this beginning, I shall now proceed to the object of this publication. I shall first prove that the present arrangement of society is a bad one; that it is based upon error of the grossest kind, and that, as a natural consequence, it produces all the misery, and vice, and crime, and all the other evils, that everywhere abound. I shall then explain the principles on which alone the happiness of man can be founded. I shall describe a few of the arrangements that are necessary to this end, and show their vast superiority over any of the arrangements which now exist.

To prove then that the present arrangement of society is a bad one, we have only to look at its fruits. Jesus Christ says, "If a tree bring not forth good fruit, hew it down, and cast it into the fire;" and applying this principle to the present arrangement of society, let us examine its fruits. If we find that it bringeth not forth good fruit, why, according to Christ himself, we are to put an end to it; we are to hew it down and cast it into the fire. Now I would ask any man whether the present arrangement of society bringeth forth good fruit; or whether it does not, on the contrary, bring forth the very worst fruit that any state of society could possibly produce? It luckily happens, that this is a case that admits of no dispute, for it rests not on argument alone. It needs no reasoning to decide it. These fruits are before the eyes of every man; every man can see them, and what is worse in another sense, every man can feel them. These fruits are, in the first place, anger, hatred, and all kinds of uncharitableness. In the second place, beggary and starvation; groups of people wandering about the streets and roads, clad in miserable rags, without homes and without food, and hundreds die weekly through hunger and utter destitution. Our houses are scarcely ever freed from some object of want and wretchedness. Thousands of people are driven to the commission of all manner of crimes. Theft and robbery, and murder, and prostitution, and suicides, everywhere abound; our gaols are crammed with these unfortunate victims. It has even become dangerous to be out in the dark; robberies are committed in the open streets; no man is safe; although policemen and watchmen are stationed in all quarters. People are reckless of their fate; enduring all the sufferings of hunger and want, while they see an abundance around them, they are excited to the commission of any crime; and they care not the consequences of it. If they are sent to gaol, it is more a relief than a punishment, and if they escape, they are obliged to continue their dreadful pursuits. In short, none of us are happy; those who

have wealth are afraid of losing it; they are tormented with all kinds of fears and anxieties; and those who have none are either starving, or in a state approaching to it.

Now, these are the fruits of the present system; they are plain and visible before the eyes of all men; and will any man say they are good fruits? Can any man say it? No, it is impossible. Well, then, what is to be done? Why, "if a tree bring not forth good fruit, hew it down, and cast it into the fire." This is the command of Christ himself. Can anything be plainer? What, then, can our opponents say? Will they for a moment talk about consistency? Is it consistency to believe in the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and, at the same time, act in opposition to them? Is this Christianity? Yet the whole of those who call themselves Christians do this. Here is a system producing all the evils that any man can imagine, and, instead of putting an end to it according to the direction of Christ himself, they are actually supporting it; they are maintaining the very thing they ought to destroy. And what is the most unaccountable, while we are attempting to destroy it, by establishing a better, and thus obeying the commandment of Jesus Christ, our opponents have the modesty to call us Infidels and themselves Christians. So that, besides this abominable absurdity, here they are outraging the very dictionary; they are reversing the meaning of words. According to them, those who practise Christ's doctrines are Infidels, and those who do not are Christians. But such are their wise and rational proceedings.

Now, considering for a moment the fruits of this system, the unlimited number of evils that flow from it in all directions, and the severity of these evils, what are we to think of the men who say that such a system is a good one, and that it needs no alteration? Can such men care a farthing about morality or virtue? Can they care a farthing about common humanity? Above all, can they care a farthing about religion? Yet (and who could believe it?) the ministers of the gospel, the promoters of morality and religion, are the very men who are first and foremost in maintaining this system. But I will leave the matter with themselves to settle. Christ says distinctly that such a system ought to be destroyed, and with him they may settle their difference.

To hear people talk about religion, about morality, about virtue, about venerable institutions, and about maintaining our glorious constitution in church and state, in the midst of these things, is truly abominable. Nothing can be more outrageously ridiculous.

But even this is a faint description of the evils which surround us; it is quite impossible to comprehend them, much less describe them. It has been proved over and over again, before committees, of the House of Commons, that hundreds of people die through pure starvation and nothing else; that tens of thousands are laboring for four and five shillings a week; that this sum is all they have to maintain themselves and families; that their principal food is oatmeal and potatoes, with occasionally some salt herrings. Now, in the face of these things, what are we to think when we consider that the people of this country can produce four or five times more wealth than they can consume? That they can produce more food and clothing than all of us could eat or wear, and yet thousands of us are starving? Does it not argue ignorance in some quarter? Does it not

prove that those who manage our affairs are either grossly ignorant or that they grossly neglect their business? One or the other of these it must prove, and whichever it be, neither ought to be suffered to continue.

Look for a moment into their own newspapers; read their own accounts of the evils that exist. See the anger, and hatred, and strife, and fraud, and deception, and theft, and robbery, and murder, and suicides, and crimes, and evils altogether unlimited in number, and all proceeding from this brutal arrangement of society. People are driven into all kinds of vice, solely from the want of the means of a livelihood. Thousands of females are driven to prostitution through this cause, and no other, and evidence of it is to be found in their own newspapers. Yet we are told by the ministers of the gospel, whose duty it is to put an end to these things, that no alteration is required, that no change is necessary; and that we are Infidels for desiring it. Now, can anything be more enormously wicked? Can anything be more abominably outrageous? Because we wish to put an end to want, and vice, and wickedness, we are infidels, and bad men! *They may go on a little longer in this way, but the time is not far distant when very different will be their language, and very different their proceedings.* The veil which has for ever darkened the eyes of the people, is now being removed. It has been torn from the eyes of thousands, in spite of all the efforts of the priesthood to prevent it. And I beg to inform them, that in the course of a very few years longer, the whole will be as completely removed, as darkness is removed by the rising of the sun.

Talk about morality, indeed! My opinion is, that he who would continue the present arrangement of society, is the most immoral man in existence. He might as well tell us at once, that starvation, and theft, and robbery, and murder, and suicide, and prostitution, are all good things, and ought to exist. These are the fruits of the present arrangement, and any man who maintains it, maintains at the same time, a continuance of all its fruits. Can anything be plainer than this? Can anything be more logical? Let the parsons who have been at their universities, refute it if they can.

Now, as to the human suffering that this system must occasion, there is no estimating the amount. It is altogether inconceivable. Look at the number of suicides that take place weekly, through a reverse of fortune, embarrassed affairs, and various other causes springing out of this system. Think of the mental agony of the families of these people. Look at the thousands of people walking about in utter destitution; driven about from parish to parish; their sufferings mocked instead of relieved. Read the account of a poor woman in London, who had a child dead; read of her wandering about from parish to parish for assistance, to enable her to bury it; and read of a brutal overseer, after refusing her relief, telling her to go to the doctor's and sell it! Think of the distraction of this poor woman, and the outrage thus done to her feelings. Read also of a case which lately happened in Scotland; a poor man having a child dead, had it buried, but not having the means of paying the burial dues, it was ordered to be taken up again, and the wretched man carried it home under his arm. These are fine samples of Christian charity and benevolence. These are fine specimens of the benign influence of the Christian religion. Read also of

a poor woman and her two children, in a state of complete exhaustion and despair, taking refuge among pigs; read of her children being found next morning dead by her side; and herself insensible, and scarcely alive. Read of these things, and thousands of others which happen daily, and then comprehend, if you can, the wickedness of the men who would continue such a system. And in the face of these things, does it become us to talk about our Christian charity and benevolence; our "venerable institutions," and such like stuff?

Think also of the sufferings of thousands of people who are confined in prisons, and of others who have been transported from their native country, think of the sufferings of the families and relations of all these people, and then consider that the whole of them might have been made, under wise and rational arrangements, intelligent and virtuous men and women. Consider this, and then estimate the wisdom and humanity of those who manage our affairs. Talk about humanity! Why, if there were one particle left among the intelligent part of the people of this country, could they remain silent under such scenes? Could they see all this misery and suffering inflicted upon their fellow-creatures, without attempting to relieve them? Yet they do see it, and they see it apparently with callous indifference. But the reason is, this brutalizing system has destroyed the best feelings that belong to our nature. It has made man the enemy of man, by the scramble which is going on for wealth. The interest of one man is opposed to that of the other, and hence these scenes of outrage and disorder.

But the evils of the present system are altogether unbounded. They are daily and hourly to be seen; and, therefore, to enumerate any more is both useless and a waste of time. I have already noticed fifty times more than sufficient to prove that the system is a bad one, and that we ought immediately to alter it. Having then settled this point, I now come to the errors upon which it is built; the ground and source of all its manifold evils.

The source, then, of all our troubles, is the belief of man's responsibility, in conjunction with a system of individual property. This is the volcano from which issue all the evils that afflict us. Not an evil can be mentioned, that cannot be traced to this source. All the anger, all the hatred, all the revenge, all the deception, all the fraud, all the uncharitableness of every kind, all the vice, all the theft, all the robberies, all the murders, all the wars, all the suicides, all the prostitution, and every other species of evil that exists, can be as clearly traced to this cause as the branches of a tree can be traced to its root. Now this being the case, when we can trace all these evils to the belief of man's responsibility, is that alone not sufficient to prove it false? Truth could never occasion these things. Truth is the source of good, and error alone the source of evil. Were it otherwise, then, indeed, we might complain of some imperfection in nature; then, we might talk about the fall of man, the depravity of his heart, his inward corruption, and all such vulgar and ignorant nonsense. But, when we can trace all our evils to gross and palpable errors; when we find invariably that truth produces good, and error produces evil; then, indeed, we are sensible of the beauty and harmony of nature's laws; then we are impressed with

their grandeur and excellence, and filled with feelings of wonder and admiration.

Perhaps, of all the absurdities that are to be found in the minds of Christians, the one that here presents itself is the greatest. They tell us that man is a responsible being; that he ought to be punished for his wickedness; and if we ask them what makes man wicked? "Oh," say they, "it is his corrupt nature, his depraved heart." Now, although our opponents say many wild and curious things, although they stick not at trifles, surely they will never presume to say that man makes his own nature or his own heart. Yet, unless they do this, what are they to do? His depraved heart and corrupt nature lead him into wickedness, and if he did not make these himself, surely they are not so cruel as to make him responsible for them. If man has a depraved heart and a corrupt nature, how can he help it? He did not make them so; he could not make his own nature or his own heart, and if these are bad why blame him for it? He could not help it.

But, besides this, here they are actually charging God with making man depraved and corrupt. Now, if we were to do this; if we were thus presumptuously to find fault with the works of God, why, all the dictionaries in the world would not afford them language sufficiently expressive to describe our horrible blasphemy, our daring insult to the Deity. But as it is, as the act is theirs, and not ours, it is all quite right. It is quite pious and quite religious. There is no blasphemy at all in it. They are one thing, and we are another, and this makes the difference.

Our opponents presume to talk about our principles leading men into vice and crime; but if such notions as these have not that tendency, nothing in this world can have it. Here they tell the human race that they are all made corrupt and depraved, that they are "rotten to the very core," as Mr. Roebuck said, "that their hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" which is all blasphemy, if anything can be blasphemy; and the human race, believing all this, act, of course, as we see them act; they fall into all kinds of vice and wickedness. Were they told the contrary of this, they would then have some encouragement to be good; they would then know that they could be good. But to tell them they are bad by nature; that they are prone to evil, and especially when practising all kinds of vice, is, in my opinion, a direct encouragement to vice. If their tendency to evil is greater than that to good, how can they help it? It is perfectly rational that they should be vicious. Their vice is the result of one of the natural laws of the universe. That which is heavy, will always weigh down that which is light. Any man who knows what a pair of scales are, knows this. But, let me ask here, is it possible that men who believe this can believe that man is a responsible being? Can they punish him for that which, they must admit themselves, is a natural result of the immutable laws which govern the universe? Yes, it is possible. There are thousands of men who believe this; and if we venture to express, however mildly our dissent from such notions; oh, we are infidels, deists, and atheists, and bad men! Such is their wisdom and charity.

Now, were the human race told that all these notions were gross errors, that they were absolute trash; that man was not prone to evil, that he was not naturally corrupt, or depraved, that his nature was good, but that the source of his

evil was his ignorance of what that nature is, and not in the nature itself, together with the institutions surrounding him, which have arisen out of that ignorance; were they told this, they could then remedy the evil. They would then set about acquiring knowledge of their nature, and this would enable them to alter existing institutions, and thus would the source of their evils be removed. But, to tell them that this source is their own bad nature, and not in existing institutions, is, as I said before, a direct encouragement to vice, and its present prevalence is a proof of it. They cannot alter their own nature, and hence they remain in the poverty, the vice, and the misery in which we now see them.

But I must now return more immediately to my subject. These absurdities presented themselves so glaringly, that I thought I would finish them off before I proceeded further. Hitherto, I have only *asserted* that man is not a responsible being, but now I shall proceed to prove it. As some disputes have arisen as to what we really mean by this word, "responsibility," I will define it before I go further. Man, we say, is not a responsible being. By this we mean, that he is neither to be blamed nor praised, rewarded nor punished for either his thoughts, feelings, or actions. This is the utmost extent of our irresponsibility. And the reason is, that all these are given to man independent of himself. That society has the power to give to each individual, good thoughts or bad thoughts, good feelings or bad feelings, and good actions or bad actions, and, in short, to make for each individual any sort of character it pleases. Now, when this is the case, we say it is unreasonable, irrational, and, at the same time, cruel, to make man responsible; that is to say, blame him or praise him, reward him or punish him, whatever his character may be.

Now, that man's character is formed for him, and not by him, I shall now proceed to prove. When a child comes into the world, its character depends, in the first place, upon its physical organization; and, in the second place, upon the particular training up that it shall receive, and all external circumstances that shall surround it from birth. Now, that the child had no power in forming its physical organization, no man, for a moment, can doubt. Its brain, and everything else were given to it altogether independent of itself, and therefore it cannot be responsible for these. Its particular training up is the next thing to look at. Has it any power over it? Can it direct its parents how they are to manage it? The thing must be evident. It has no more power in this case than it had in the other, and that was none at all; and hence it follows that its character was given to it independent of itself, and, therefore, it is not a responsible being.

Is it not plain and simple that if it have a good organization, and a good training up, and placed in good circumstances, that it will have a good character; and if it have the opposite of these, is it not equally plain and simple that it will have a bad character? How is it that the English have one general character, the Scotch another, the Irish another, the French another, the Italians another, and so on through all the nations of the world? Is it because each nation has willed its particular character, or that it desired it in preference to any other? No. It is entirely because the circumstances surrounding each are different the training up is different, the education different, the religion different, the habits different, the

manners different, and so on; and hence the difference of characters. And if we confine ourselves to our own country we shall see, in the same way, a variation of characters according to the variation of circumstances, only on a smaller scale. How is it that one man is virtuous and another is vicious? Is it because the parties will ed having these characters; or is it not owing to the different circumstances of each? If I have a good organization and placed in good circumstances, I am sure to have a good character; but then I did not form it myself. I did not form my own organization, nor did I place myself in these good circumstances; and if these form my character, what nonsense it is to say that I formed it.

But what is very singular, while our opponents say that man forms his own character, they are actually practising the opposite doctrine. In bringing up their children, how careful they are in keeping them out of bad company; and how particular they are as to the school they send them to. They inquire into the moral character of the master, his religion, and various other matters; and they do all this for fear their children should be liable to contract bad habits, see bad examples, and thus acquire a bad character. Yet, in the face of all this, they tell us that man forms his own character. Why, if he did, what is all for this? Why exercise all this care in preserving their children from bad company, bad practices, bad examples, and other unfavourable circumstances? What effect can these have upon them if they form their own characters? And if these have some effect upon them, as they evidently believe they have, is not that proof enough that they do not form their own characters?

Now, can our opponents call this consistent? Can they pretend there is nothing irrational here? Practising the very thing which they deny; acting upon our principles, and at the same time denying their truth. Is this consistent? Is it rational? But the whole of their practices and professions are a jumble of contradictions from beginning to end.

Another instance of absurdity of a similar kind is to be found in a report of a committee of the House of Commons, to inquire into the condition of the laboring classes. Among the witnesses who were examined was a parson of the Church of England, which circumstance by no means renders the absurdity anything the less. After proceeding a while he says, "The effect of the present system of employing laborers has been dreadful; it has totally demoralized the lower orders: it has made them poachers, thieves, and robbers." What, the system has! The system has made them poachers, thieves, and robbers! Why, I thought people formed their own characters. Now just look at this absurdity. Here is this parson believing that man forms his own character, and, at the same time, telling the House of Commons that the characters of the laboring classes were formed, not by themselves, but by the particular system under which they were employed; that the system had made them into thieves, poachers, and robbers. Can anything be plainer than this? Was absurdity ever more glaring or palpable?

Besides this, here is the "collective wisdom of the nation" receiving evidence that their measures have made people into poachers, thieves, and robbers, and the next moment they go to work as coolly as possible, and enact severe laws for

their punishment; and while this is going on, the parson is busy in his pulpit telling the people that God has provided a heaven and a hell for the good and the bad; that the bad will go to the latter place, and there endure everlasting torments for their wickedness. And what is best of all, if we should venture to express our doubts as to the justice or consistency of such severe punishment, especially when we considered that the "system had made the working classes into poachers, thieves, and robbers," as the parson told the House of Commons; O! we are infidels, deists, and atheists; we are all that is bad! we are quite ignorant and visionary. Yes, I dare say we are; and it is very well we are nothing worse; for if we are to judge of people by their thoughts and actions, I should say that the parties who can exhibit such rare signs of wisdom as these, cannot be very far inferior to Solomon himself. Now I merely mention these instances of absurdity to show that even our opponents admit, on some occasions, the truth of our principles, and that they actually act upon them. In the case of training up their children we see them acting exactly in accordance with the principle that man does not form his own character. And as to the parson before the House of Commons, he says outright that it was the system that formed the characters of the labouring classes, and not themselves; which is precisely our doctrine. So that, besides our own arguments in the matter, even our opponents furnish us with arguments in proof of our doctrines.

But some people will exclaim, "If the character of man is formed for him, and not by him, would you let people go unpunished when they do that which is wrong?" Now, in the first place, it is unjust to punish them, because their characters were given to them independent of themselves; but as long as this irrational system continue, some means must be used to deter them from the commission of crime, and although punishments are resorted to for this purpose, they by no means have the desired effect. People still do wrong. They still rob and murder, in spite of all their punishments, either in this world or the world to come. Let the advocates of punishments remember this. But in the second place, (and let our opponents take notice of this,) when we have the power to make people either good characters or bad characters, either virtuous or vicious, would it not be a thousand times more wise and more just to make them into the former rather than the latter? Would it not be better to make them all wise, virtuous, and happy, than ignorant, vicious, and miserable? Let our opponents give us an answer to this. Let them tell us whether it be wise and just to make people into bad characters, and then punish them for being so? Let them point out to us the wisdom and justice of this. Let them show us the humanity of everlastingly torturing their fellow-creatures, when the whole might be avoided by wise and rational arrangements. And the next time Mr. Stowell lectures against what he calls Infidelity, let him tell us whether these are the blessed effects of the Christian religion; whether these are specimens of its benign influence; its mercy, its charity, its forbearance, and its benevolence?

When we think of the miseries the human race have to suffer, owing to these irrational arrangements, how limited does the intelligence of man yet appear! And how ridiculous are all his pre-

tensions to knowledge, while groaning under these vast and monstrous evils.

I have now, I think, fully proved that man does not form his own character; that it is altogether formed for him; and therefore he is not a responsible being; that to blame him, to praise him, to reward him, or to punish him, whatever his character may be, is altogether absurd and unjust. Upon the opposite of this principle society is now built, and, as I said before, this error, in connection with a system of individual or private property, is the sole and entire cause of all the evils which now afflict the human family. I have said that these evils can be as clearly traced to this cause, as the branches of a tree can be traced to its root, and I shall now proceed to prove it.

The greatest and most prolific of all our evils is that of poverty, or the want of the necessities of life. Now, this is as clearly the product of individual property, as smoke is a product of fire. Individual property engenders the disposition to grasp or accumulate, and it is owing to this that so many are in poverty and rags. Some possess these qualifications in a higher degree than others, and some have better opportunities than others, and hence it is that some are immensely rich while tens of thousands are starving. And observe, it is not owing to a scarcity of provisions in the country; it is not owing to this that people are starving. On the contrary, it is owing, as the collective wisdom of the nation have more than once declared, to a superabundance of these. What! a superabundance of the necessities of life in the country, and people starving; Yes; but, then, those who are starving cannot get them. What! cannot get them! what for? Why, their humane and charitable fellow-Christians have them locked up in vast warehouses, and they thus withhold them from them. And is this Christianity? Is this an evidence of its benign influence? Is this loving their neighbors as themselves? Is this abounding in love and charity one towards another? But we blame them not for it; the system is the cause of it and not themselves.

How different would everything be in a Community! All would be rich alike; no private or individual property; what belonged to one man would belong to the whole, and what belonged to the whole would belong to each. The more wealth we possessed the better would each of us be off, which is the very reverse under the present arrangement. People are starving because we possess a superabundance of wealth. They have worked so much that they have produced more food and clothing than we require, and they cannot get these because they cannot get work, and they cannot get work because they have already worked too much. Now, who can help admiring an arrangement so evidently sensible; so abounding in marks of intelligence and wisdom, and at the same time so beautiful and harmonious! We must not find fault with it, or we are infidels and Atheists. Such is the wisdom of the age.

In a community all would be different; being all equal, we should work about four hours a day and no longer, which would be quite sufficient to supply us all with an abundance of every necessary and comfort of life. And instead of living in the filthy, confined, and unwholesome towns in which we now are, we should have the most healthy situations the country could afford. Only look at the filthy holes that human beings

now live in; see them creeping under ground, and there eating and sleeping in the most confined and unhealthy atmosphere; see some of them without beds and without food, and covered with miserable rags; see them enduring all the miseries and sufferings that hunger and want occasion, and then say who is the Christian or the Infidel; he who would continue such things or he who would put an end to them?

Poverty, then, or a want of the necessities of life, clearly proceeds from individual property, and no other cause. And as poverty is the cause of an unlimited amount of vice and crime, it follows, that by removing it from the world the whole of its mighty evils will also be removed. Now, as to theft, and murder, and suicide, and prostitution, they so evidently proceed from individual property and responsibility, that I hardly need show it. No man can thief in a Community,—all would be his own; and, therefore, to thief would be ridiculous; it would be a robbery committed upon himself; and even that is an absurdity. And as to murder, the very idea is absurd. How can a man murder, if he believe in irresponsibility? If a man be offended by another, he would have no anger or malice towards him for it; he would freely forgive him: he would know that his character had been formed for him, and not by him; and, therefore, to injure him would be both absurd and unjust. And as to suicides, if we could suppose that in a Community there could be any reverses of fortune, by one man robbing another; if we could suppose people would become bankrupts and such like; if we could suppose there would be horrible workhouses, where husbands would be separated from their wives, and wives from husbands, and children from parents; if we could suppose these and many other things, then we might imagine the possibility of suicide, but not until then. And as to prostitution, every body knows that poverty is the cause of that, and therefore that is at once put an end to.

Now, when we think of the ministers of the gospel, and know that their sole business is to put an end to vice, and crime, and wickedness of all kinds, what are we to think of them when we see them going on as they are? Instead of putting an end to the causes which produce these, they are actually supporting those causes with all their might. They are supporting the very things they ought to destroy. What are we to think of such men? Can we believe them to be sincere? If they desire to put an end to vice and crime, why do they not remove the causes which produce them? These causes are clear before their eyes; they cannot plead ignorance of them; why, then, do they not remove them? Preaching and praying are of no use, at least they are not adequate to the task. They have preached and prayed for nearly 2000 years, and mankind are more vicious now than ever they were. And surely 2000 years are long enough to try an experiment. That experiment is an evident failure and the unbounded prevalence of vice is a proof of it. And how should it be otherwise? Nature is uniform in all her operations; where certain causes exist, certain effects will always exist; and therefore, if we want to remove vice and wickedness from the world, we must first of all remove the causes which produce them. But the ministers of the gospel, far otherwise enlightened, go in the very face of nature, and support these causes. And while they do this, they imagine they can frighten people from vice and wicked

ness, by telling them that God will punish them eternally after they are dead. Now, that this is silly and stupid in the extreme, we have the most decided proofs. The first is, the absurdity of supposing that effects can be removed without the causes; and the next is, that notwithstanding all their efforts to frighten people into morality, they are more immoral than ever.

The only way, then, to remove vice and wickedness from the world, is to remove the causes which produce them, and this can only be done by the means of Communities. Let, then, the ministers of the gospel preach this to the people; let them apply their churches and chapels to this purpose, instead of the useless purposes to which they are now applied; let them teach the people a knowledge of their own nature, instead of a knowledge of things altogether imaginary; let them explain to them the formation of the human character; let them show them that the character of every man is formed for him, and not by him, and therefore, all men ought to "abound in love and charity one towards another;" let them tell their congregations that the reason this precept of Jesus Christ has never yet been practised, is because they have hitherto believed that man formed his own character, which is a decided and palpable error; let them describe to them the fatal effects of this error; let them tell them that it alone is the source of all the anger, all the hatred, all the malice, all the revenge, and all the ill feeling and uncharitableness of every kind that have ever existed between man and man, and the whole of those would be at once annihilated by the explosion of this error alone; let them teach the people these things, and they would do more in one year, in putting a stop to vice and wickedness, than they have done in 2000 years of preaching and praying.

What use is it in giving people commands when they cannot obey them? What use is it in pouring out precept after precept, when people cannot practise them? And who can practise the precepts of Jesus Christ under the present system? Can any of those who call themselves Christians do it? Do any of them do it? Not a soul of them. Then, is this not a proof that the system is bad? If men *were* to practise these precepts, the whole scene would be changed; no anger, or malice, or hatred, or revenge, or theft, or murder, or beggary, or want, would ever be heard of. But people cannot practise these precepts under the present system. The Christians themselves acknowledge it. And how is it likely? Man is endowed with a principle called self-preservation, and he is compelled to act under its influence. It is that principle which preserves his existence, and if he did not possess it his existence would cease. Let not, then, the Christians tell us that it springs from his depravity. In its operations it compels man to seek that which is beneficial to him, and avoid that which is hurtful. All men, therefore, are striving to benefit themselves. Now, the present arrangement of society is such, that while one man is benefiting himself he is injuring another; and this is owing to an opposition of interests, or individual property. If, therefore, we could arrange society so that the interest of one man would be the interest of the whole, the thing would be accomplished at once; for, while one man, under the influence of this same principle of self-preservation, was benefiting himself, he would at the same time be benefiting the whole, and thus all would be peace and harmony. Now, it fortunately hap-

pens that we *can* arrange society in this way. We can establish communities all over the country, such as proposed by Robert Owen, containing about 2000 people each, or more if convenient. In these Communities every man would be equal, and there would be no individual property, or no clashing of interest. Every man, therefore, in benefiting himself, would benefit the whole, and thus would there be effected a greater amount of good for the human race than ever was effected by all the warriors, and heroes, and conquerors, and patriots that ever lived.

How can a man love his neighbour as himself, when that neighbor is swallowing up all his custom? And how can one shopkeeper love another, when he sees him resorting to all sorts of schemes to take away his trade? How can a workman love his employer, when he sees him reducing his wages! Or, how can the employer love his workman, when he sees him striving to prevent him? How can a tenant love his landlord, when he sees him selling off his goods for rent, and thus casting him into the streets to starve? How can a debtor love his creditor, when he sends him off to gaol for a debt he cannot pay? How can there be any love at all under the present system? Tradesmen of all kinds have to practise all manner of deception and fraud; they have to lie, and cheat, and deceive, or they cannot carry on. They affect friendship for each other, merely as a cloak for their fraud and deception.

And, as to "doing unto others as you would wish others to do unto you," there is nothing in the whole world even approaching to it. The system itself is a burlesque upon the precept; a complete mockery. Its very existence would cease, were the precept practised. Not an officer or functionary of any description could act. Judges, jurors, magistrates, lawyers, witnesses, attorneys, constables, policemen, and fifty others, would all be at a stand still; not one of them could act. Their duties would be wholly at an end, and the system would be blown to atoms. And as to tradesmen, and all other description of people, they also would be equally fast. Now is this very circumstance not sufficient to show the beauty of the present system? How harmoniously it works with the precepts of Jesus Christ!

Only think of a hundred and thirty thousand men, called soldiers, being spread all over the country; and just think what they are for. Christ commands them to love their neighbors as themselves. And what does the system do? Why, slaughter them. They are hired and kept by their fellow-christians, for the express purpose of slaying those whom Christ says they ought to love as themselves. Now, can we have a finer specimen than this, of the beauty and harmony of the present arrangement? Can we have more evident marks of profound wisdom and solid sense? But we are infidels if we find fault with it; we must, therefore, be very cautious.

If any man want to witness absurdity altogether incomprehensible, let him follow the soldiers to church on a Sunday. Let him enter the church, and deposit himself in a pew (if his fellow-christian will allow him,) where he can have a view of both parson and soldiers. Let him listen a while, until the parson come to, "Love thy neighbor as thyself; do unto all men as you would they should do unto you;" and then let him look at the soldiers full in the face. What is he to think? Here is the parson telling them to love their neighbors as themselves, while both parson

and congregation have them hired for the express purpose of slaying people. What is any man to think of such an exhibition? Why, that the concern altogether is truly abominable. Another display of absurdity is exhibited by Christians professing to forgive men their trespasses, while they practise the very reverse. The parson rhymes over every Sunday, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," and so on. Now, can anything be more abominable? Calling upon the Deity to forgive them their trespasses, because they have forgiven those who have trespassed against them, which is one of the greatest falsehoods that ever was uttered. They talk about the Deity being omnipresent and omniscient. Why, if this be the case, how could they ever muster up assurance enough to talk this way in his presence? If he possess these attributes, he must know that they are telling him that which is the very opposite to truth: he must know that they do not forgive men their trespasses, but that they punish and persecute them in all manner of ways; and, therefore, to ask his forgiveness, in consequence of them forgiving others, is one of the most abominable abominations that man can conceive. Talk about blasphemy! Why this is fifty thousand times worse. There is no word in the dictionary suitable for it. It positively excels all. What! forgive men their trespasses, and thousands upon thousands of people suffering all manner of punishments? Thousands suffering in gaols, for debts they are unable to pay! Millions suffering minor punishments of all sorts! and telling the Deity that you forgive men their trespasses! Nothing can equal it. It is a total eclipse of all.

Christ says distinctly in his sermon on the mount that "Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." Now what in the name of all that is merciful, is to become of all the Christians? Not one of them will forgive men their trespasses. To the infernal regions the whole of them are doomed; at least if this be true, and they say it is. What an awful idea! They will not only not forgive men their trespasses, but they actually abuse us if we do it. We are teaching a doctrine that will lead all men to forgive each other their trespasses; that will make them all kind and charitable, one towards another; and for doing this they call us infidels, atheists, deists, and all the bad names they can think of. But we do not blame them for it; we know that their characters have been formed for them, and not by them; and, therefore we freely forgive them all their trespasses. But is it not strange and unaccountable that, while we practise this precept of Jesus Christ, and they do not, they call us infidels, and themselves Christians, and that we will go to hell, and that they will go to heaven? Can anything be more mysterious? But such is their rationality.

We are preaching to the world the formation of the human character; we are telling all men that it is unjust and absurd to make man responsible for either his thoughts, feelings, or actions; that these exist in every individual independent

of himself; that his character is altogether formed for him, and not by him; and that, therefore, we can never be angry with each other, but must always forgive one another our trespasses, which is precisely the precept of Jesus Christ; only we give reasons for it, and he does not; and for doing this we are infidels and bad men, and will be sure to go to hell. And what makes the thing fifty times worse, while those who do not practise this precept, although they profess to believe it, are Christians and good men, and will be sure to go to heaven. Such is the power of error and delusion.

I recollect speaking to a Christian on this particular point, of forgiving men their trespasses. I asked him how they could expect to go to heaven as long as they punished people as they did; for, said I, Christ says, "Unless you forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." He replied, "We do forgive men their trespasses." "What," said I, "sending men to prison for paltry debts; transporting them, and punishing them in all manner of ways; is this forgiving men their trespasses?" "Oh," says he, "but we forgive them in our hearts." "Oh, indeed," I replied, "then, I suppose, if God sends you to hell, and if he only forgive you in his heart, you will be quite satisfied." His answer came from his looks instead of his mouth.

Such is a specimen of the masses of error and absurdity which yet fill the minds of millions of men; and such are the sources of all the miseries the human race are suffering. A change, however, is at hand. The eyes of the people are opening; error and delusion are taking flight. The veil is being withdrawn, and there is no power on earth adequate to replace it.

I have now, I think, accomplished my task. I have exposed the errors and evils of the present arrangement of society; I have traced the vice and crime to the source from whence they spring; I have shown that that source is not in the depravity of man, as the priesthood allege, but in the ignorant and irrational arrangements around him; I have shown that as long as these arrangements last, so long will man be ignorant, vicious, and miserable; and that as soon as these arrangements shall cease, and Communities be established upon the plan proposed by Robert Owen, so soon will man be transformed into a wise, virtuous, and happy being.

In conclusion, I beg to call upon the Clergy of all Denominations; I respectfully demand that they either clear up all these masses of errors and contradictions, or at once abandon them for ever. It is their duty to remove error wherever they see it; and if I am in error, I beg they will show it; and if I am not in error, I demand that they will acknowledge it, and give up their present proceedings. One or the other of these they are bound to do, and which ever it may be I shall feel contented. Truth only can prevail and if our opinions are not truth, the sooner we are without them the better.